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EU demand for Brazilian fruit 'set to rise five per cent'



Agrícola Famosa is Brazil's biggest melon grower and exporter

Abrafrutas forecasts European market share growth of five per cent each year for next three years after sector bounces back from Covid-19

European demand for Brazilian fruit is expected to grow by five per cent in 2021 – that's according to Abrafrutas, which represents about 85 per cent of the total volume of fresh fruits exported from Brazil.

The country's fruit growers and exporters association forecasts a European market share increase of five per cent year on year for the next three years, with greatest growth in demand for Brazilian mangos, melons, avocados, limes and table grapes.

Brazil is one of the largest fruit producers in the world, growing 46 million tonnes in 2019, about 60 per cent of which is destined for EU shores.

In 2019 Brazil exported a total of €735m to the EU, including mangos (€192m), melons (€135m), grapes (€81m) and limes (€79m), with about half of that being fresh fruit and the other half processed fruit such as juices.

With 70-75 per cent of Brazilian fruit exports arriving in the EU and UK each year, the trading relationship is critical for both sides, and Brazil remains a major source of limes, grapes, melons, bananas, mangos, and the Amazonian superfruit the açai berry.

Bouncing back from Covid-19

According to ApexBrasil, there was an "initial shock" at the start of the pandemic, mainly due to the implementation of lockdowns in Europe and consumers pivoting towards foods with longer shelf lives. But the Brazilian trade and investment promotion agency said the country's fruit sector had "bounced back" with an impressive 78.5 per cent rise in exports to Europe in September 2020. Shipments were up a further 6.7 per cent in October.

The organisation pointed out that historically, Brazil's exports of tropical

increase in sales to Europe between August and September, and the more moderate increase between September and October, when sales have stabilised.

Total fruit exports from Brazil to the EU in October 2020 totalled € 72.6m, with UK shipments amounting to €19.9m.

Looking ahead to 2021, ApexBrasil said strong growth in Europe and the UK "is expected to continue as people strive for balanced and healthy diets that include a diverse range of exotic fruits".

UK trade deal

When it comes to trade with the UK, the possibility of post-Brexit tariff and paperwork increases are a concern, but there were reports of discussions taking place in November between UK and Brazilian trade representatives.

The talks discussed strengthening bilateral trade and investment links, and the

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fruits occur during the last four months of the year, which explains the large

possibility of a post-Brexit bilateral

trade deal, with separate reports in January that the Brazilian government could seek a Mercosul-UK trade deal similar to the trade agreement between the South American bloc and the EU. So far, no agreement has been reached.

Ramping up supply

UK trade negotiations aside, the challenge for the Brazilian fruit sector is one of timing and scale, as it races to respond to European consumer trends, such as an increased focus on healthier diets and demand for sustainable and organic produce.

The Brazilian fruit industry, the majority of which is made up of smallholders, is responsible for approximately 5.6 million jobs.

ApexBrasil said Brazilian producers and exporters are working to increase production “to meet demand

in a way that is quick, efficient and keeps the sector competitive”, while putting an emphasis on sustainability.

Brazil's largest melon producer

One leading Brazilian fruit producer is Agrícola Famosa, which was established in 1985 in the state of Ceará in north-east Brazil. Today it is the largest melon grower and exporter in the country, harvesting up to one million melons per day and employing up to 5,000 people during peak periods. Most of the melons (65 per cent) are exported to Europe, especially Germany and the UK.

In efforts to protect pollinator bees which are crucial for melon production, the company has pioneered organic pest control methods alongside the selective use of pesticides and insecticides. Today, there are around 6,000 hives and 300 million bees across the plantations which straddle the semi-arid Caatinga region of the north-east.

In addition, Agrícola Famosa recycles almost all waste into compost and organic fertiliser, eight tonnes of which are used per hectare of melons. The company has also built windmills on the farm to provide electricity both for the company, as well as the surrounding area.

The producer's sustainability efforts are certified by Rainforest Alliance and GlobalGAP.

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